Chapter Nine

NATURE AND THE COSMOS

Besides its famous subterranean landform, Wind Cave National Park is well known for its wildlife, native flora, and distinctive mineral formations above ground. As a protected enclave, a central function of the park is to preserve and steward its unique geological and biological resources for the viewing and appreciation of its visiting public. Many different groups come to this park each year, and they carry with them diverse sets of understandings about the park's landscape that are influenced by their respective cultural origins. Two of today's largest user groups are European Americans and American Indians, each of whom approaches the park and its natural world from very different philosophical perspectives.

One perspective is based on a philosophy steeped in a tradition of empiricism that grew out of the European Enlightenment. It is situated in a physical world where nature represents the sum total of its observable material properties, processes, and conditions. It has no existence beyond what is given in its corporeal appearances as these are observed through rigorous scientific observation. It is the tradition within which the natural history of the Black Hills, their fauna, flora, and mineral formations, are typically described and analyzed in natural history studies and popular guidebooks (Pettigrill and Whitney 1965; Turner 1974; Larson & Johnson 1999). It certainly stands at the foundation of the way in which the area of Wind Cave National Park is represented to the public (see, for example, WICA websites).

This perspective stands in marked contrast to the philosophical traditions of the tribal nations who historically occupied the area. While tribal approaches to the park's landforms, animals, plants, and other natural resources involve empirical observation as well, they are nested in an ontological framework with very different premises about the relationship between nature and the human world. This framework is connected to a material universe of practical observation, but it does not end here. In Lakota and Cheyenne schemes, for example, the material world is ultimately rooted in a metaphysical universe where the concrete appearances of things are manifestations of a spiritualized cosmos. As William Powers (1986:153) describes the difference:

> The Lakota see a continuous relationship between nature and culture, and as Indians they do not seem themselves as having the same privileged position as the white man affords *Homo sapiens.* If there is any difference, humans are the last arrivals of the created world, and they must do whatever they can to learn *as much* as other life forms that preceded them. And here one of the great differences between Indians and non-Indians is underscored. Whereas Euro-Americans science and theology understand humans to be the sine qua non of all living things, the Lakota see humans as the most humble. For whites, the humans were the last to inhabit the earth, and are therefore the crowning glory of all that preceded them. For the Lakota, humans were the last, and that makes them the newest, youngest, and most ignorant. When Lakota seek knowledge about their present state of affairs, they seek it through instructions imparted to the medicine men from animals, birds, and other animate and inanimate forms that serve as his helper.

These two very different ways of seeing the natural world have contributed historically to distinctive approaches to nature. One emphasizes the separation of humans from nature, indeed, the

domination of the human species over other life forms, animate as well as inanimate, whereas the other gives priority to the connections and indivisibility of all life forms (Brown1989a:181-182). In this perspective, humans stand on equal grounds in a natural world, on whose beneficence they depend for their lives and well being.

How European American and American Indian philosophies have articulated and competed in our understanding of Wind Cave National Park and the multitude of natural resources that reside there is an important subject but one beyond the scope of this work. A more pressing objective of this and subsequent chapters is to give some understanding of how the tribal nations who once lived in and around the Black Hills, especially the Lakotas and Cheyennes, understood the life forms that make up this world.[1] It is an understanding that must be approached through all of its nuances and complexities if we are to understand why Wind Cave National Park and the region that surrounds it continue to occupy such an important place in the cultural traditions and practices of today's Lakotas, Cheyennes, and other tribal peoples too.

I. INDIVISIBILITY OF THE COSMOS

Although the Lakotas and Cheyennes share much in common regarding their understandings of the cosmos and its workings, there are both obvious and subtle differences in their philosophical perspectives. In the cultural traditions of both tribes, there is a basic belief in the existence of a unifying cosmic force or principal. The workings of this force are largely influenced by spiritual figures that represent and embody basic elemental properties in nature, including the Sky, the Sun, the Earth, the Winds, and the Thunders. These forms impart life, both in a material and immaterial sense, to all humans, plants, animals, and other living forms, including waters and mountains, and they exert their influences in manifold ways. All of the resources which make up the geophysical world, from rocks and minerals to soils and clay, exist as living entities in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, and they are believed to possess a form of agency in the same way that plants, animals, and humans do.

A. Cheyenne Concepts of Oneness

In Cheyenne philosophy, according to Karl Schlesier (1987:7), cosmic power, *exhastoz*, "permeates and maintains" the universe. It is a life force or energy that is invisible except by its quantum-like effects; it both resides within and is generated by *Ma'heo*, the Blue Sky, and the various spiritual figures or potentialities, the *Maiyun* and *hematasoomao,* who have free access to it (Schlesier 1987:190). It is the *Maiyun* spirits whose actions restore and concentrate this energy for the purpose of regenerating all life forms (Moore, J. 1996:212). Schlesier (1987:190) describes these spiritual potentialities and the workings of *exhastoz* as follows:

> In Tsistsistas understanding, they are causal (they can be brought about by specific Tsistsistas behavior) and noncausal (they may manipulate themselves without a trigger. They are nonlocal (i.e., they are everywhere) and local (i.e., they may appear in a specific locality or in a specific physical form). They are fissionable. They may be local at a number of places at the same time. They are outside, or, outside *and* within the construct of time and therefore represent universal "information."

[1] The discussions about Cheyenne and Lakota cosmologies in this and the following chapters are abridged and very elementary. The nuances and rich complexity of these two tribal cosmological systems can only be alluded to here. What is presented is only a very partial picture of a much larger body of knowledge carried by many respected Lakota and Cheyenne intellectuals and religious leaders today.

Humans may partake of this power by establishing partnerships with spiritual figures and through the observance of sacred ceremonies (Moore, Liberty, and Straus 2001:873; Moore, J. 1996:212-213). Indeed, ceremonial observance is necessary to renew this power because, according to John Moore (1996:213), it is exhausted by the end of winter and needs to be regenerated in the spring.

Ultimately, everything in the Cheyenne universe comes from and returns to its source in *Ma'heo,* which is the cosmic singularity. When Cheyennes refer to that which is sacred, they describe it in reference to *Ma'heo*. Thus, the word for sacred power is *ma'heno. Ma'heonetano* means to think in a spiritual or sacred way, while *ma'heoneve* refers to a state of being sacred and *ma'heono'eetahe* expresses the action of doing sacred things (Leman 1987:415).

B. Lakota Views on Cosmic Singularity

Lakota philosophy is also permeated by the idea that the universe embodies a oneness, a unifying principle or singularity, in which everything is interconnected (DeMallie 1987:27-28). *Wakan Tanka* embodies this notion of oneness.[2] It is the universe or cosmos in its totality. It is the creator of all things that have been and will always be: it is both everything and one at the same time. *Wakan Tanka* embraces all life: it is omnipresent and omnipotent (Powers 1986:118-126; DeMallie 1987:28-29).

Within this universe, the Lakotas distinguish between what is common and uncommon, ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and incomprehensible, profane and sacred (DeMallie 1987:27-28; Fools Crow in Mails 1991:46-57). In the Lakota language, *wakan* is the word used to describe that which is sacred. Anything, including animals, plants, places, people, objects, and actions, is *wakan* when it expresses and exhibits extraordinary or incomprehensible qualities. The word *wakan*, according to George Sword (in Walker 1980:96-97), is derived from the word *kan*, which means "ancient" or "a strange and wonderful thing or that which cannot be comprehended." *Kan* with a gutteralized "k" can also mean nerves or arteries, implying metaphorically an old, incomprehensible interconnectedness and unity (Buechel 1970:282). Father Eugene Buechel (1970:525) in his *Lakota-English Dictionary* defined *wakan* as "sacred, consecrated; special; incomprehensible, possessing or capable of giving *ton*, i.e., an endowed spiritual quality which is received or transmittable to beings making for what is especially good or bad." [3] *Wakan* is also sometimes glossed as a state of power, a vitalistic energy or presence in the early English sense of this word, not in its modern meaning as a force opposing, manipulating, acting upon, and controlling its surroundings (DeMallie and Lavenda 1977:154-166). William Powers (1986:120), however, questions the use of *wakan* to mean a form of power. From his perspective, the best translation and gloss of *wakan* is incomprehensible, mysterious, or simply sacred (Powers 1986:109-114, 126).

As I interpret various texts on Lakota spirituality and cosmology, *ton* (*tun*, or *tunwan*) appears to be the Lakota word that most closely approximates the idea of a numinous cosmic energy or vitalizing power, while *wakan* describes the manifestation of its presence. *Wakan* is an incomprehensible or mysterious state made so by the presence of a numinous essence called *ton*, although the distinction between the two is often conflated in the literature (Buechel 1970:499; Powers 1977:52; DeMallie 1987:30). *Ton* is related to the Lakota word for creation or birth

[2] In the representations of some Lakota religionists or *wakan wicasa* [holy men] (Black Elk in Brown 1971; Fools Crow in Mails 1972, 1991; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984), *Wakan Tanka is* sometimes personified and represented as a masculine, godlike figure. But in other instances and in other depictions (Walker 1980, *Wakan Tanka* is represented in a more gender neutral manner as a cosmic singularity.

[3] See also, Stephen Rigg's definition in his *Dakota-English Dictionary* (1968:507-508).

tonpi (Powers 1977:52), and therefore, it might be likened to a quantum-like, animating presence behind existence that pervades the universe and that makes certain things and events exceptional or *wakan* (Walker 1917:153).[4] Everything is believed to have this spiritual essence or force, which ultimately resides with *Wakan Tanka* and the sacred figures who represent aspects of this cosmic unity (Black Elk in Brown 1971: xx). According to Frank Fools Crow (in Mails 1991:48-49):

> Power is not everywhere present, but it is where they[5] are and so it surrounds us. It is above, below, and on all four sides. Also some power was given to each thing in the universe when it was created --Sun, Moon, stars, rocks, animals, birds, fish, plants, people.

In the Lakota scheme of things, there are many different spiritual figures of varying importance, the *wakanpi,* whose *ton* influences the appearance and workings of "supernatural things" (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:95). *Ton* is not singular but differentiated qualitatively and quantitatively according to the spiritual figures that impart it. Thus, the spiritualized essence or *ton* of *Wi*, the Sun, appears in fire (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:95). By imparting their *ton*, certain spiritual figures create a state of *wakan* in other phenomena (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:95; Walker 1980:220-221, 225, 230). This power or energy is contained in the *wakanpi* who comprise different kinds of spirit potentialities that exert their influence on the workings of the universe and the course of human destiny.

II. THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE

Many tribes in the northern Plains, including the Arapahos,[6] Cheyennes, and Lakotas, order their worlds in terms of two interconnected elliptical spheres, one crossed by a vertical axis with a zenith and nadir and the other by a horizontal axis with two intersecting lines. In these spheres, time and space are not separate categories but indivisible aspects of each other (Powers, W. 1977:4, 169, 175; Moore, J. 1996:203-206; New Holy 1997:30-31; Anderson, J. 2000:91-118). The seasons and the directions, for example, are organized by the same system of classification represented by the four winds, which also symbolize stages in the life cycle and points on the landscape. Notwithstanding some fundamental similarities among these three tribes in their basic model of the world, they differ in how they prioritize particular universal coordinates for purposes of understanding and organizing the many phenomena that make up their worlds.

A. The Cheyenne's View of Cosmic Order

In Cheyenne traditions, the universe is divided into a spiritualized feminine principle, *Esceheman*, The Earth or Our Mother, and a masculine one, *Heammawihio* or *Ma'heo*, The Sky or Our Father. According to George Bird Grinnell (1972:2:88-91), the Sky was the Supreme Being and creator of all other spiritual and material forms including the Earth. As Karl Schlesier

[4] One of the Lakotas that Bucko (1998:201) interviewed, however, used the Lakota word, *wó'okiye*, to express the idea of a life force or energy. This is derived from the word *okiye*, which means, to help (Buechel 1970:606).
[5] This refers to major spiritual figures in the Lakota pantheon.
[6] There is an important body of published work on Arapaho cosmology and Arapaho relations to the worlds of animals (Kroeber 1900, 1902; Dorsey and Kroeber 1903; Anderson, J. 2000, 2001). While we make note of some of this here and in the following chapters, the material is not as systematically developed as that on the Lakotas and Cheyennes simply because there is not much about their historic or modern cultural affiliations to the area of Wind Cave National Park that we could develop in a way comparable to the Lakotas and Cheyennes.

(1987:7) explains, *Ma'heo* created the universe, *Emamanstoon*, by opening the ground at the location of his fingerprint with the use of a digging stick. In the Cheyenne Sun Dance or New Life Lodge [*Oxheheom*][7] and Animal Dance [*Maussam*], an earth painting is made that mimics the creation of the universe from its cosmic center and creator, *Ma'heo*, to its four directions, which are represented by four colored mounds that signify four sacred mountains, the pillars of the universe, at the corners of the world. The Four Winds are known as the *Ma'heyuno* (Powell 1969:2:434; Schlesier 1987:93, 120). After this, the *Maiyun*, who work in the seven planes of the universe were formed, including *Esceheman*, the Earth, *Atovsz*, the Sun, *Nonoma*, the Thunder, *Nemevota*, the Rain, and all the *hematasoomao*, the immortal spiritual essences of all life forms (Schlesier 1987:8).

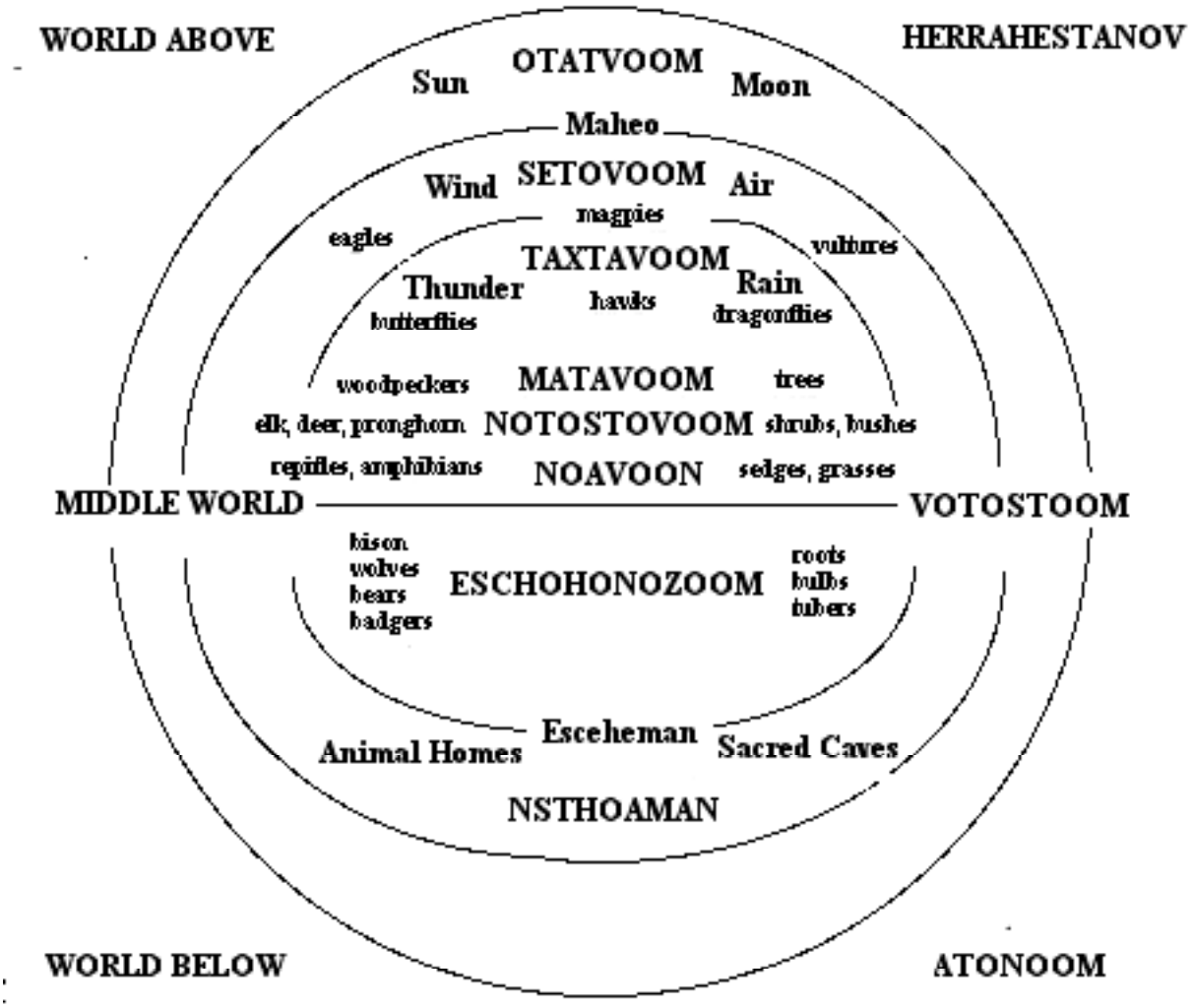
On the horizon, where the sky and earth meet, the universe takes its directional form. The *Ma'heyuno*, the four sacred persons who guard the four directions, only have personal spirit names because of their sacredness (Schlesier 1987:8), and they often appear either as men on horseback or as men with horns (Powell 1969:2:435). Rudolph Petter (1913-15:422-423) related what Lefthand Bull told him as follows:

> There was a time when there was no earth, only the Great-Mysterious ruled in the wide space. It was all like fog in a dreary evening when one cannot distinguish objects. The Great-Mysterious one had four great servants, the ones whom he has set to watch the four quarters. He told these beings that he would make the earth and also human beings. 'Go about and you will soon find that earth', said he to his servants. They went about for quite a time but came back and reported that they could not find anything. 'Go again and look carefully,' he told them. But in spite of their efforts they found nothing. Four times they were sent and came back without having seen or found anything. The fifth time the Great-Mysterious told them 'now you will see something.' And it happened, as they were floating about, they noticed a shapeless and dark mass looking 'like one about to give birth to a child.' They returned and reported what they had seen. 'Go again and see what I have created, you will find a new being there, bring it to me.' the Great-Mysterious told them. They went and found the earth shaped and on it a new being they had never seen before. They brot (*sic*) this being to the Great-Mysterious who took it in his arms and said: 'This being is a man whom I have made to inhabit the earth, it is my child and I shall love him.' After that the man was brot (*sic*) back to the earth to inhabit it and live on it.

When the four winds came upon the earth and stayed, their homes or "pillars" were situated at sacred mountains. *Hesenota* (or *Esseneta'he*), whose color is white, symbolizes morning and spring (Petter 1913-15:424; Powell 1969:2:436; Moore, J. 1974a:150, 1996a:206). This is the direction from which the light and life originate. He is the one who lives in the southeast where the sun rises. In other accounts, however, his color is red or yellow, and the animals and plants with which he is associated include redheaded woodpeckers, yellow-shafted flickers, and red willows. *Onoxsovota* (or *Onoxsovon*), whose color is yellow (Powell 1969:2:436) or black

[7] Other words for Sun Dance in the Cheyenne language include: *Hoxéhe-vohoó? ehestotse* or *Evoneenehestotse* (Northern Cheyenne Language and Culture Center 1976:109).

FIGURE 21. The Cosmic Tiers in the Cheyenne's Universe



**Adapted from Moore 1986:182, 183, 1996:205; Schlesier 1987:5

(Moore, J. 1974a:151-152; 1996:207), stands at the northwest where the sun sets. He is associated with death and darkness, with the moon, with the deep waters where water monsters live, and with predatory birds with crescent shaped claws. *Sovota* (or *Sovon),* whose color is red (Powell 1969: 2:436) or green (Moore, J. 1974a:154-155, 1996a:206) brings thunderstorms, rain, and the grass of summer, and he resides at the southwest corner of the world, while *Notomota*, whose color is black (Petter 1913-15:745; Powell 1969:2:436) or white (Moore, J. 1974a:154, 199a6:206) represents cold, snow, inertia, and disease and dwells in the northeast. The *Ma'heyuno* help humans: they appear in visions and give knowledge of the workings of the universe in many sacred contexts (Powell 1969:2:435). The *hematasoomao*, the spirits of animals, are believed to have their abode at the homes of the four directions (Petter 1913-15:211).

The Sacred Persons, *Ma'heyuno*, exercise influence over the Sacred Powers, the *Maiyun*, who reside above and below the earth in the form of natural forces (Powell 1969:2:435, 437). The most important "Above Person" is the Sun, *Niesehaman*, a messenger of the Southeast, and he is closely followed by the Thunder, *Nemevonam*, an associate of the Northwest (Powell 1969:2: 436). Other Above Persons include the Moon, the Stars, and the Rain. The most significant "Listener Under the Ground" is Grandmother Earth, *Esceheman.* These *Maiyun* may appear and reveal themselves to humans in other forms, including as wolves, bison, bear, elk, and swifthawks (Powell 1969:2:439). Along with the *Ma'heyuno*, they exercise control over the *hematasoomao* of lesser life forms among animals, plants, and minerals (Powell 1969:2:435).

Besides its horizontal divisions, the universe was divided along a vertical axis. The zenith of the world above was the place of the creator, *Ma'heo*, and the spiritual universe, while the nadir of the world below was the home of the female generative principle, *He?estostse*, and the material world (Moore, J. 1996:208-211). The *Maiyun*, as the messengers of the Sacred Persons, have spiritual and material forms (Schlesier 1987:8). They hold positions in the sky, but they also occupy sacred caves, *Ma'heonoxsz*, on earth where they once imparted sacred knowledge to the Cheyenne's two prophets, *Motsiuiv* [Sweet Medicine] and *Tomsi'vsi* [Stands on the Ground or Erect Horn]. From caves and other locations they frequent, the *Maiyun* guard and take care of the homes of the animals whose spirits, *hematasoomao*, reside in other cavern formations under the earth (Schlesier 1987:4-7).

The *Maiyun* are able to access *exhastoz*, the cosmic energy and the source of breath, *omotome*, which gives material form its life energy. The *hematasoomao* are the immortal spirits, souls, or shadows of all living forms (Grinnell 1972:2:93; Schlesier 1987:4-13; Moore, J. 1996:209), and they are released in their mortal or physical forms at the behest of the *Maiyun* who fulfill the cosmic plan of *Ma'heo* (Schlesier 1987:4, 8). Each species or distinct life form has a limited number of *hematasoomao*, which according to Cheyenne belief are disappearing because of the ways humans are domesticating and exploiting the world (Schlesier 1987:4-5, 10-11). Thus, when the bison nearly became extinct at the end of the nineteenth century, the Cheyenne believed that the *Maiyun* were keeping the *hematasoomao* or spirits of the bison in their subterranean homes, awaiting a propitious time to release them again in their physical form (Schlesier 1987:4-5; Moore, J. 1974a:163, 1996:211).

B .The Lakota's View of the Cosmic Order

Lakota religionists differ in how they conceptualize the spiritual figures or potentialities that constitute or make up the cosmic singularity that is *Wakan Tanka*. Some of the knowledgeable men who consulted with James Walker in the late nineteenth century (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:94-95; Lone Bear in Walker 1980:127-128) thought of *Wakan*

Tanka, the divine oneness, as embodying the *Tobtob*, the 4 x 4, or sixteen discrete yet integrally related spiritual presences or potentialities. Ten of these spiritual presences constitute natural forces or elements whose relationships with one another can be understood, in part, through Lakota stories of creation as rendered and interpreted by James Walker (1983). Creation began when *Inyan*, the oldest spiritual presence, made through its own motion, first *Maka* [Earth], her land and water (the blue blood of *Inyan*'s veins). Part of the water was then transformed into a blue dome that covered the earth and became the Sky or *Skan* [*Taku Skanskan*] (Melody 1977; Walker 1983:194-195). Through this division, the *tanton* or material and the *tanton sni*, the immaterial essences of the universe, were created (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh and Tyon in Walker 1980:95). Aspects of these three spiritual figures, in turn, went into the creation of the Sun, *Wi* (Walker 1983:195). In Walker's interpretation, Stone, Earth, Sky, and Sun constitute the superior spiritual presences in the universe, each of which has an associate. The Sun's partner is the Moon, *Hanwi*, the Sky's helper is the Wind, *Tate*, the Stone's associate is the Thunder, *Wakinyan*, and the Earth's helper is the Meteor, *Wohpe*, who also appears as the White Buffalo Calf Woman, *Pte San Winyan* and gifts the Lakota with their sacred Buffalo Calf Pipe (Densmore 1918:63-66; Hassrick 1964:217-219; Finger in Walker 1980:109; Powers, W. 1977: 54; Powers, M. 1986:43-49; Looking Horse 1987:68-69; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:38-41).

There are four additional sacred presences, who appear later in cosmological time: the Four Winds [*Tob Kin*] and the Whirlwind [*Yamni*], the sons of the Wind [*Tate*], and the Face [*Ite*], who is the daughter of the first Buffalo People [*Pte Oyate*], the Old Man [*Waziya*] and the Old Woman *Wakanka*]; the last three are not part of the *Tobtob*, however. The other two lesser sacred figures are the Bison Bull [Tatanka] and the Bear [*Hununpa*] (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh and Tyon in Walker 1980:94; Powers 1977:54). Although James Walker (1917:79-81) personified and ranked these figures hierarchically as superior, associate, and inferior deities, the Dakota ethnographer and linguist Ella Deloria concluded in her correspondence with Franz Boas that these figures were not grouped in a hierarchy. Generally, they were not envisioned in anthropomorphized terms. Nor were they represented, according to Deloria, in the kind of Greek-like dramas in which Walker often cast them (Jahner in Walker 1983:17-27).

In some of the narratives of more recent Lakota religionists, the divisibility of the cosmic singularity -- that is, *Wakan Tanka* -- is depicted in other ways. Nicholas Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:312), as one example, represented it in his version of the story of the Great Race. After the people were dispersed over the earth from its center in the Black Hills, he tells how Slow Buffalo said:

> Up in the heavens, the Mysterious One, that is your grandfather. In between the earth and the heavens, that is your father. The earth is your grandmother. The dirt is your grandmother. Whatever grows on the earth is your mother. It is just like a sucking baby on a mother" (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:312).

In another context, Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:238-239, 392-393) described it on a four directional plane composed of the spirits representing the North, South, East and West that bisected a vertical axis at its center where all of the divisions come together as one. In a parallel fashion, Fools Crow (in Mails 1991:49-59) envisions the cosmos as forming a plane or disc with four quarters, the sacred persons of the Four Directions, who come together in a center that is linked to a circular dome above, the domain of *Tunka'sila* [Grandfather], whose ceremonial color is blue, and another dome below, the realm of *Maka Unçi* [Grandmother Earth], whose color is green. The vertical aspects of this ordering are also manifested in the representation of the ceremonial articles used in the *Yuwipi*, which according to Louis Kemnitzer (1970:41-43), must represent the *Wakinyan* [Flying Ones] in bird feathers, skins, plumes, and bones; the

Wamakaskan [Those Who Move about on the Earth] in skins, tails, claws, and quills; the *Wahutkan* [Those who have Roots] in wood, tobacco, and other plants; and *Makah sitomni* [All the Earth] in stone and soil.

Generally speaking, the differentiation of the universe along its vertical axis is not as well articulated in the published literature on the Lakotas as it is on the Cheyennes. It is clearly implicit in Lakota texts but not explicitly elaborated upon. Whether the differences in Cheyenne and Lakota orderings represent significant cultural distinctions between the two tribal nations or whether they are a function of how tribal narratives were interpreted by outsiders is difficult to know.[8] Drawing on William Powers, Joseph Eppes Brown, and Arthur Amiotte's interpretations, Alexandra New Holy (1997:138-139) suggests that a hierarchical ordering of the universe is largely ephemeral and undifferentiated in the Lakota scheme of things. It appears to be inseparable from and collapsed into their ideas of directionality, which are organized within a circle where time and space are united. The *axis mundi* of their universe is simultaneously conceptualized as a line on a horizontal plane linking north and south, or east and west, and as a line on a vertical plane connecting the nadir and zenith. This is why the direction north and the nadir (or underworld) are often seen to occupy the same space in Lakota cosmology.

In liturgical texts and in the interpretations of Lakota spiritual leaders, as these appear in many different published sources, the meaning of the horizontal disc represented by the Four Directions or Four Winds is described in great detail. The Four Winds are considered highly *wakan* among the pantheon of the Lakota's most influential spiritual beings, and as such, they are appealed to in most every major ceremonial observance, including *Hanbleciya* [fasting or vision seeking] (Densmore 1918: Black Elk in Brown 1971:49-50; Walker 1980:131, 133; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:122-135), *Hunkapi* [making relatives] (Walker 1980:124, 210, 221; Black Elk in Brown 1971:103-104) and *Yuwipi* (Kemnitzer 1970:71; Powers 1982:54; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:163; Bucko 1998:184, 196, 200, 208). The stories about them tell how they brought order, direction, and movement to the world. Through their actions, the world is renewed, plants are created, the birds and animals are assigned their places in the universe, and humans given their basic orientations too. Indeed, a great deal about Lakota cosmology is revealed in their sense of *Tate*, the Wind, and his sons, the Four Winds, *Tob Kin*, and the fifth, the Whirlwind, *Yamni* (Jahner in Walker 1983:200-203).

Each of the Winds is represented by a particular color, is the source of specific life functions and behaviors, and is associated with certain animals, birds, and plants. There are differences among Lakota people, however, in which of the birds, mammals, and plants they may associate with a particular direction. There are also significant differences in how the basic colors are matched with these figures. Some of this variability is probably a result of the inversion of symbols in the ritual thinking of *Heyoka* [Contraries], but in other instances, it is a function of local cultural differences or even individual interpretation. Very briefly, the North Wind, *Waziyata* or *Yata*, is most commonly associated with the color red, the buffalo, the wolf, the magpie, pine, and kinnikinick; he is described as stingy and morose but is also seen as a source of procreation and health. Sometimes his color is white and inverted with his brother's, the South Wind, *Itokagata* or *Okaga*. The South Wind is typically represented by the colors white or red, linked to the elk, the meadowlark, the crane, waterfowl, and sage. He plays the flute and wins the heart of *Wohpe*. He is a symbol of bravery, kindness, generosity, creativity, industry, romance, and renewal. The West Wind, *Wiyohpeyata* or *Eya*, generally has black for his color. The blacktail deer, swallows, lizards, hawks, flickers, bats, and butterflies are his messengers, and

[8] Lee Irwin (1994:30) observes this difference too and suggests that the elaborate vertical distinctions the Cheyenne make may be related to their Algonkian cultural heritage.

cedar is his favorite plant. He is responsible for purifying the world through rain and thunder. Finally, the East, *Wiyhiyanpa* or *Yanpa* is most often linked to the color yellow, associated with the whitetail deer, the nighthawk, the owl, the redheaded woodpecker, and sweet grass. He is characterized as discontented, foolish, lazy, and noisy but also stands for wisdom and understanding. He sleeps by day and travels at night (Dorsey, J. 1894:442; Curtis 1907-30:68, 71-73, 77; Densmore 1918:196-197; Wissler 1912:6, 19-20; Beckwith 1930:407-408; Kemnitzer 1970:71; Black Elk in Brown 1971:19-20, 103-104, 119-120, 133-136; Walker 1917:172-173, 1980:84, 125, 126, 127, 173, 197, 232, 1983:61, 71, 72, 81-82, 84, 159, 161,162, 183, 184, 300, 301, 309, 313, 321-322, 340; Powers, W. 1977:75-77, 191-193, 198-199, 1982:54, 1986:81-82, 138-140; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:39; Fools Crow in Mails 1991:59; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:163).

The remaining four *Tobtob* represent sacred presences which make-up the domain of spirituality that is necessary for sustaining life in each and every living thing (Amiotte 1989c:164). These are *Niya,* the breath of life; *Nagi*, the spirit; *Nagila*, the spirit-like; and *sicun,* a spiritual potency (Powers 1977, W:52-53). There has been considerable discussion in the literature regarding their meanings and precise applications in Lakota thought and practice, and some of it is confusing because each of these concepts gets conflated. Arthur Amiotte (1987:86-88, 1989c:164-172), a Lakota scholar and artist, provides the best and most straightforward explication.

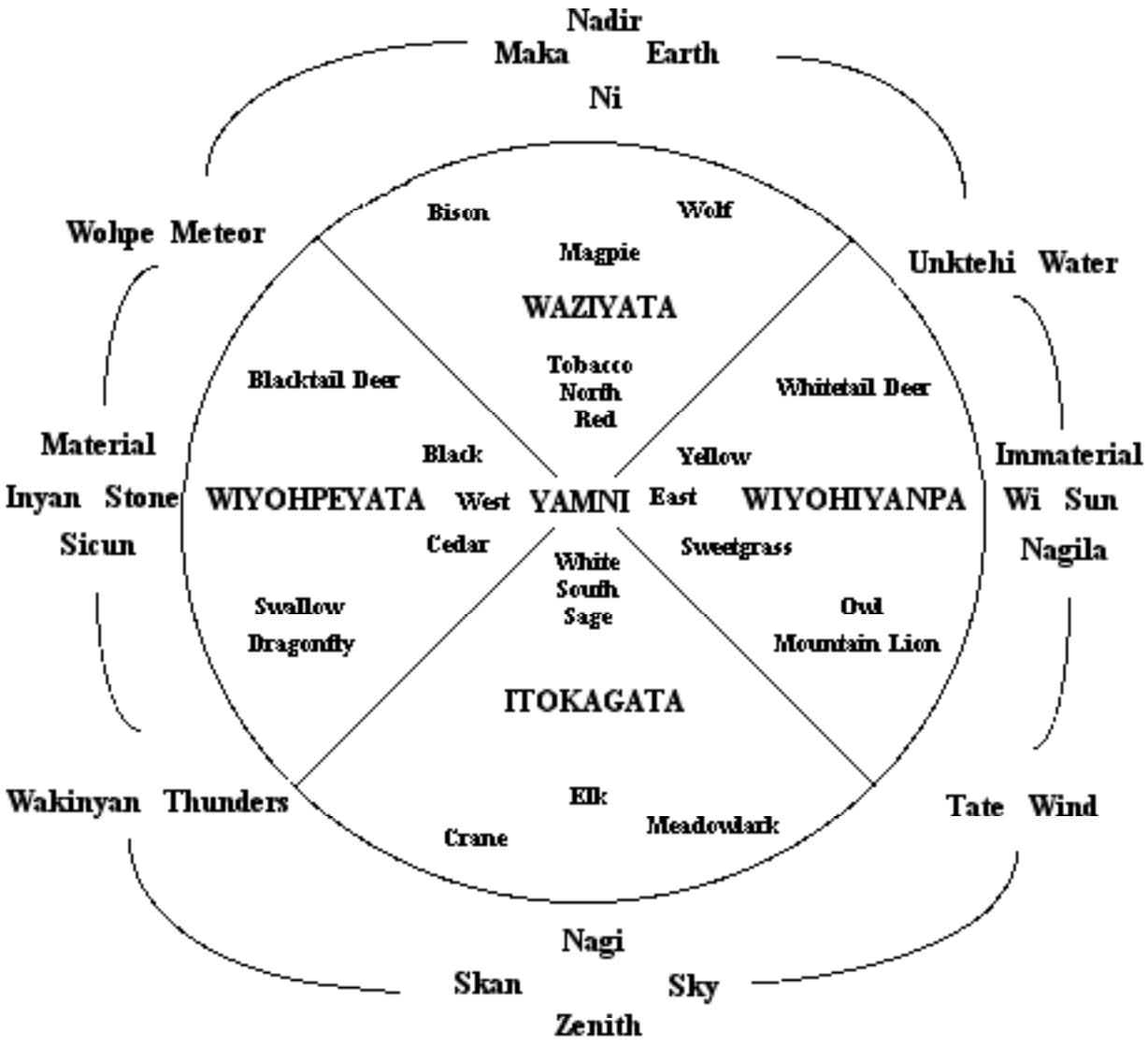
One soul is the *niya* or *ni*, which is the breath that gives rise to *woniya*, life (Amiotte 1987:86, 1989c:164-165). It is the soul or spirit that imparts substance to a living form and contributes to its materialization. It is closely associated with the Earth, the Wind, and the bison (Densmore 1918:67-68). It is also linked to the stars, which are sometimes understood as the *woniya* of *Wakan Tanka* (Goodman 1992). When *ni* ceases to exist at death, the physical remains of a person deteriorate into nothingness (Good Seat in Walker 1980:70-71, 72; Sword in Walker 1980 83; Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:95).

Another soul, the *nagi*, is the immortal shadow or ghost spirit, a spiritual template that mirrors the physical form of being (Buechel 1970:342, 771; Powers, W. 1977:53; Amiotte 1987:87, 1989c:165-166; Goodman 1992:40-41). The *nagi* remains with the body, but it can also travel, encounter, and communicate with the *nagi* of other life forms (Good Seat in Walker 1980: 70-71,72; Amiotte 1989c:87-88). It can warn a person of impending danger, but it can also abandon an individual, leaving him/her vulnerable and requiring ritual intervention to "call" the soul back. After death, when the breath ceases to flow, the *woniya* or life of a person is gone and the only soul that remains is the *wanagi.*[9] After death, when the *wanagi* is released and travels to the spirit world, the body becomes nothing (Good Seat in Walker 1980:70-71; Sword in Walker 1980:85).

The *nagila*, the "little ghost or shadow," according to Amiotte (1987:87, 1989c:171-171), is the soul that from the time of conception brings motion to the formation of life and its growth. It is an aspect of the life force that originates with *Taku Skanskan*, the spiritual presence that ignites all forms of movement. The *nagilapi* of humans and all other life forms have a *ton*, force, potency, or energy that is necessary to life, but different from the *ton* of the *Taku Wakan* or the

[9] This expression is used to identify the soul after the death of its living, materialized form.

FIGURE 22. Cosmic Coordinates in Lakota Universe



** Adopted from Dorsey, J. 1894; Walker 1917, 1980, 1983; Densmore 1918; Beckwith 1930; Black Elk in Brown 1971; Fools Crow in Mails 1972; Powers, W. 1977; Amiotte 1987, 1989c.

**NOTE: The association of animals, plants, and colors with specific winds varies, and so do the connections with the figures on the edge of the circle, some of which make up the *Tobtob*.

most sacred spirit forces (Good Seat in Walker 1980:73; Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:98; Goodman 1992:40-41).

The final soul, or *sicun*, is an aspect or clone of another and often greater spiritual presence, the *Taku Wakan*, whose potency, or *ton*, can be embodied in a stone, a song, a prayer, or an animal part and activated or called into service when it is needed. The *sicun* is the essence of a spirit who has appeared to a person in a dream or who has been invoked by a holy person and then transferred to other people for their use and protection. The Sun's *ton*, for example, can be imparted to a stone and made into a *sicun* (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:95-96). All the major spiritual figures have a *ton* that can influence the workings of humans, animals, plants, and other living forms (Good Seat in Walker 1980:72-73). When something is invested or reinvested with the spiritual force, *ton*, of the sacred, it becomes a *sicun* (Powers, W. 1982:11). The *sicun* gives its holder the potencies and abilities of the spiritual helper or partner it embodies (Powers 1977:52-53; Amiotte 1987:87-88, 1989c:170-171; DeMallie 1987:30; Goodman 1992:40-41). The *sicunpi*, according to Frank Fools Crow (in Mails 1972:49-52, 93-94, 186), constitute 405 qualitatively distinct spiritual potencies, all of which represent different aspects of *Wakan Tanka.* Everything that exists in the universe has a *sicun*, which William Powers (1982:14) describes as forming the immortal spirit species of the universe. The *sicun* are somewhat like the *hematasoomao* of the Cheyenne, insofar as they are shared across different living forms and reincarnated from one generation to another. Over their lifetime, spiritually gifted people may accumulate many different *sicunpi* who not only assist them in their own life endeavors but can also be called upon to help others. *Sicunpi* protect those who hold them from discord, danger, and ill-health, and when one person shares or gives away their *sicun* to another, their own protections and potencies are depleted (Powers, W. 1982:11-14; DeMallie 1987:30).[10]

III. THE ELEMENTS

In the Cheyenne and Lakota scheme of things, the sun, moon, thunders, and stars that make up the sky, and the stones, soils, and waters that make up the land are living beings. Like humans, animals and plants, they possess physical and spiritual properties (Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh and Tyon in Walker 1980:95; Schlesier 1987:6, 11). The elemental spiritual figures in tribal cosmologies impart life, both in a material and immaterial sense, to all humans, plants, animals, and other living forms, including caves and mountains, and they exert their influences in many different ways.

All of the resources that make up the geophysical world from rocks and soils to water and wind are believed to possess a form of agency. This world is especially important in understanding tribal ideas about the Black Hills and the area of Wind Cave in particular. In many Lakota understandings of the Black Hills, for example, they are known to be highly sacred because they contain all the elemental aspects of the cosmos. As the highly revered spiritual leader, Pete Catches (in Parlow 1983a:2) once said: "All of the Black Hills is sacred. It unifies the whole thing. Its force, its cliffs, its rock formations, its streams and lakes, rivers—and what vegetation, fruit and everything that exists and grows in the Black Hills are sacred to the Lakota people." In at least two publications (in Parlow 1983a:2-3; in Gonzalez 1996: 67), Catches elaborates on this unity by describing how the Black Hills are ruled by seven spirits who govern everything that makes the world as we know it. He stated:

[10] The Cheyenne also believe in the existence of four souls, whose spiritual forces are attributed to each of the four *Ma'heyuno* or Four Directions (Moore 1974a:166).

> To the Indian spiritual way of life, the Black Hills is the center of the Lakota people. There ages ago, before Columbus came over the sea, seven spirits came to the Black Hills. They selected that area, the beginning of sacredness to the Lakota people. Each spirit brought a gift to the Lakota people.
>
> The first spirit gave the whole of the Black Hills to the Lakota people forever and ever, from this life until the great hereafter life.
>
> The next spirit that came told the Lakota people there is an external fire deep in the bowels of the earth, which we know as volcanoes, the fire, the everlasting fire-so the Black Hills belong to the Lakota people, and from it, that eternal fire in the bowels of the Black Hills is the life-giving heat.
>
> The next spirit brought water, commonly known to us now as 'Hot Springs.' We went there ages ago, together healing -- which became Evans Plunge, commercialized-where we, Indians, go for our healing in the healing waters of life.
>
> The third spirit brought the air that we breathe. You'll see that -- you go to *Wind Cave* and the Earth breathes air in and out. That's very sacred. It's needed for life. Without it, we cannot live, nothing can live. The plants need air, all creation needs air**.**
>
> The fourth spirit brought the rock people, which includes the gold, as mentioned here a while ago, and the minerals. That is why the Black Hills [are] sacred to the Oval Office.
>
> The fifth spirit brought medicine. In the area of the Black Hills --that today's pain and disease has to do with AIDS --if we were left alone and if we can go there, we can develop our way of healing -- even to the end of time, which is AIDS now, today, We can do that because the Black Hills [are] sacred, because that is life itself.
>
> The next spirit brought animals, the buffalo, the deer, all the small animals from which we get body parts. From the eagle, we get eagle feathers, from many of the smaller animals, we get parts of their body, transform it into our way of life --because all of creation is one unit, one life. We are them and they are us. This is his creation.
>
> The seventh spirit brought the Black Hills, as a whole --brought it to the Lakota, forever, for all eternity, not only in this life, but in the life hereafter. The two are tied together. Our people that have passed on, their spirits are contained in the Black Hills. That is why it is the center of the universe, and this is why it is sacred to the Oglala Sioux. In this life and the life hereafter, the two are together.
>
> Why should we part with the Black Hills? Land is not for sale.
>
> I'd like a life to look forward to after this life. Generations and generations ago, our people have looked upon the Black Hills as the center of the world, and it's a circle. We began from there and we make a complete circle of life, and we go there after our demise from this world. That is why it is sacred to us (in Gonzalez 1996:67, *italics ours*).

Wind, water, fire, and stone are four elemental properties that Catches associates with the Black Hills, with two linked to very specific landscapes -- the thermal waters of Hot Springs and the air movements of Wind Cave. Bear Butte, an outlier of the Black Hills, is also identified as sacred because it contains all levels and/or basic elements of the universe (Schlesier 1987:5; Forbes-Boyte 1996:104,1999:28).

A. Stone

In Lakota perspectives, as already described, *Inyan* is the first presence in the universe, out of whose initial motion the sky and the earth were created.[11] *Inktomi*, the Spider, and the *Wakinyan*, the Thunders, are also his offspring, and he is directly implicated in the origin of the *Pte Oyate*, Bison People, who come from underground caves in the realm of *Inyan*, the mountains (Walker 1917:82, Little Wound in Walker 1980:124). According to James Walker (1917:82), *Inyan* is "the patron of authority and vengeance, of construction and destruction, and of implements and utensils." His potency can be imparted to anything that is hard as stone; his symbolic color is yellow (Walker 1980:186). *Inyan*, who exists in a materialized form (George Sword in Walker 1980:99), is invoked more than any other spiritual figure in the Lakota pantheon.

Offerings and sacrifices, which may include pieces of skin, are made to *Inyan* on things that most closely resemble him, usually stones (Blunt Horn, Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:102-103). The stones used in invoking *Inyan* are not ordinary but special in their shape and composition. Unlike common rock, which is called *imniza* (Buechel 1970:183), these are known as *tunkan*, an abbreviated and respectful address for *tunka'sila* [grandfather] (Densmore 1918:205; Powers, W. 1982:13). Ella Deloria (1944:52) suggests that the term *tunkan* refers to eternity or an endless chain of ancestral relationship going back in time. As Lone Man told Francis Densmore (Densmore 1918:214):

> The earth is large and on it live many animals. This earth is under the protection of something that at times becomes visible to the eye. One would think this would be at the center of the earth, but its representations appear everywhere, in large and small forms--they are the sacred stones. The presence of a sacred stone will protect you from misfortune.

And as Chased-By-Bears told her:

> The outline of the stone is round, having no end and no beginning; like the power of the stone, it is endless. The stone is perfect of its kind and is the work of nature, no artificial means being used in shaping it. Outwardly it is not beautiful, but its structure is solid, like a solid house in which one may safely dwell. It is not composed of many substances, but is of one substance, which is genuine and not an imitation of anything. (Densmore 1918:205).

The round stones that met these specifications are formed from the brown colored sandstone typically located in the area (Densmore 1918:205). They are often found in the bed of a lake, stream, or river (Powers, W. 1982:13), although Brave Buffalo (in Densmore 1918:208) explains that the most suitable spherical stones are found atop buttes in the direct light of the sun. Another kind is made from the crystallized sand that ants push up from their mounds (Powers, W. 1982:13).

Today, according to William Powers (1982:11), Lakotas who have faith in *Wakan Tanka* and traditional religious precepts wear a tiny round stone in a small bag made of buckskin on their person. Besides the stones that people carried on their person, large stones and boulders could

[11] Although *inyan* is identified as masculine in Walker's works, this spiritual figure appears to be gender neutral or bisexual (Powers, M. 1986:36-38). In some contexts, *Inyan* may be considered feminine as one of the two progenitors of *Inktomi*, the other being *Wakinyan*, who is almost always seen in masculine terms. Yet, in relation to *Inktomi's* half brother, *Iyo*, whose other parent is *Unk* or *Unktehi*, a masculine ascription may be appropriate since these water deities are often described in feminine terms.

also be a subject of veneration. These were sites where offerings and sacrifices were made. Historically, the stones were typically decorated with stripes painted red, *Inyan's* favorite color (Densmore 1918:208; Little Wound in Walker 1980:197; Walker 1980:118, 231, 232, 233; Catches and Catches, Sr. 1990:81). Such acts were believed to bestow endurance and perseverance on those who venerated and showed respect to *Inyan* (Walker 1980:235).

Stone also possesses an immaterial and immortal essence that is capable of renewing life. In the sweat lodge, hot stones are connected to the creation of *ni* [breath] when water is applied to them, and as a result, they are directly implicated in restoring a person's health (Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:67-86; Catches and Catches, Sr. 1990:81-84; Bucko 1999:82). More specifically, stones on which lichens grow are considered ideal for use in a sweat lodge because they don't crack (Fire and Erdoes 1972:177). These are sometimes called *inyan waksupi* [stone beadwork] (see Appendix B under lichens for other names).

In James Walker's rendition of the Lakota creation cycle (1983:220-221, 222-223, 227-228), the spirits were invited to feast on the *icage*, "white fruits," that grew under the earth, suggesting the crystalline formations in caves. *Taku Skanskan* made entrails from these fruits and molded a masculine father and feminine mother figure from them, the first *Pte Oyate*, and gave them the fruits as their source of eternal nourishment (Walker 1983:225-226, 249). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Lakota scholar, George Bushotter (in Dorsey 1889:153-154) wrote about "mysterious stones," including one that was white and looked like ice or glass. Three decades later, Rufus Pilcher (1964) recalled that a group of Lakotas requested crystalline stones from Wind Cave to use in healing. In this regard, it should also be noted that quartzite stones from the Black Hills are kept in the Plains Apaches' most sacred religious bundles (McAllister 1965).

According to Francis Densmore (1918:205), the Lakotas believed it was highly significant when people dreamed of stones, and in her text on Lakota music, she recorded numerous accounts of stone dreamers and the songs they had learned in their dreams (Densmore 1918:204-244). Luther Standing Bear (1978:215-216) wrote about these dreamers as follows:

> The stone dreamer sang a song about the night sun or moon, and also one about the day sun, which was taught to him by stones. The stones were possessed of extraordinary knowledge, for they were on the earth, in the earth, and in the sky visiting the sun and moon, so they taught the following song to the dreamer, that he might derive power from these heavenly bodies...Whenever horses or articles were lost, the Stone medicine-man was called, for he could send out his flying stones and they would locate the missing things. The medicine-man was always called with the pipe for the best results.

The power of stone to move and locate things, however, was the work of *Taku Skanskan* [That which creates movement] (Dorsey, J. 1894:445), a figure often equated with *Skan* [Sky]. As Francis Densmore (1918:205-206) describes this:

> It is said that a medicine man in demonstrating his power to acquire information by means of the sacred stones sends them long distances. After a time the stones return and give him the desired information. He is the only one who understands what they say. It is said that stones sometimes fly through the air in a darkened healing tent and strike those who have refused to believe in them. The power of stones to move through the air comes from Takuskanskan. His symbol is the boulder. He also lives in the four winds.

Louis Kemnitzer (1970:63) states that "stones refer to the earth, to permanence, to lightning, to genuineness, and to the power transmitted to living things on earth. They have power to move by themselves, and they may serve as messengers for spirits as well as exerting their own power."

Stone dreamers are called *Yuwipi* (Tyon in Walker 1980:153), and even though they were prohibited from practicing by the federal government in the early reservation era (Densmore 1918:245), they represent the most prevalent class of religious practitioners among the Lakota today. There is a rich published literature on *Yuwipi* and the ceremonies they perform that does not need to be elaborated upon here (Densmore 1918:204-244; Feraca 1961; Kemnitzer 1970, 1976; Powers W. 1982; Lewis 1990:90-93). What needs to be said, however, is that stones received in dreams could be used for many different purposes. Besides being called upon to assist in locating lost objects (Densmore 1918:205), they also helped to predict the outcome of a raid or battle (Densmore 1918:231-236). They were used in hunting and considered especially effective in summoning bison (Densmore 1918:210; Walker 1980:118, 232). But their most prevalent application was in treating the sick and in making medicines to protect people from harm and injury (Densmore 1918:246-250; Tyon in Walker 1980:153-155; Walker 1980:232).

Among the Lakotas, communicating with stones was considered 'sacred talk,' demanding the same reverence and gravity required when enlisting the aid of other major spiritual figures, such as the Thunders or the Bear (Densmore 1918:206). Their use also required truthful speech (Walker 1980:197), as in the practice of swearing on the knife. Stones were present at major ceremonies, along with other significant objects of reverence such as bison skulls and eagle feathers (Walker 1980:224, 262, 269-270).

The Cheyenne's understanding of stone, which is called *hohona* (Petter 1913-15:1015), has not been elaborated upon in the same way as it has been for the Lakota.[12] Although stone was not among their principal spiritual figures, the Cheyennes believed that stones held inherent life powers: they had animism and were capable of movement (Petter 1913-15:1015; Moore, J. 1974a:175; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:54). Stone is strongly identified with eternity and immortality (Powell 1969:1:27). As John Moore, (1974a:175) points out, a common liturgical phrase in Cheyenne songs and ceremonies is "only stones live forever."

The Cheyennes organized stones and soils primarily in terms of their colors and shapes. Red colored rock and earth was associated, for example, with the sunrise or the blood of slain beings (Moore, J. 1974a:174), as in the red earth of the Race Track in the Black Hills. Stones covered with green lichen, as another example, were linked to green hailstones and the power of the thunders to renew the earth (Ibid:171). White stones, such as gypsum or selenite, were tied to white hailstones and the powers of winter (Ibid:174). The Cheyennes also employed stones in healing, but there is very little detail about their specific uses (Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:54). Beyond this, we were unable to uncover any other information about Cheyenne beliefs regarding stone in a more abstract and spiritual sense, even though there is a good deal of material on its utilitarian functions.

Inyan Kara Mountain on the western side of the Hills is closely associated in Lakota thought with the creative potentialities of *Inyan* (Black Elk, C. in Goodman 1992:51). However, the entire Black Hills are evocative of stone and the formative role it plays in all creative processes, and this may be why so many Lakota and Cheyenne origin stories are located in this region.

[12] The variable amount of information about stone appears to mark a significant difference between these two tribes that is not a function of the focus of ethnographic studies on their cultures.

B. Earth

Whereas stone is typically identified with a masculine generative principle, the earth is feminized and understood as generating a materialized form of sustenance. The earth is called *maka* (Buechel 1970:328) in the Lakota language, and she is addressed respectfully, either as mother, *Maka Ina* (Walker 1980:234), or grandmother, *Maka Uçi* (Sword in Walker 1980:102; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:74, 97, 110; Bucko 1999:208). According to Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:312), the Earth itself was the Grandmother, while the things that grew on her surface were the Mother. No matter what particular kinship term was used to address her, she was one of the superior spiritual presences in the Lakota pantheon, the *Tobtob*, and considered highly *wakan* (Little Wound in Walker 1980:70; Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:94; Sword in Walker 1980:99). As James Walker (1917:82) described her:

> The earth is a material God, whose substance is always visible. She ranks third of the superior gods, though she existed next after the first in existence. She is most often addressed as the All-mother, for she is an ancestor of all material things, except the rock. Her domain is the world and she is the patron of all things that grow from the ground, of drink, of food, and the tipi. Her potency may be imparted to anything that has grown from the ground. Her color is green.

The belief that *Maka* is the source of the animals and plants on which people depend for their livelihood is a persisting and vital tradition in Lakota worldviews. As Luther Standing Bear (1988:194) wrote in the 1930s:

> In talking to children, the old Lakota would place a hand on the ground and explain: 'We sit in the lap of our Mother. From her we, and all other living things, come. We shall soon pass, but the place where we now rest will last forever.' So we too learned to sit or lie on the ground and become conscious of life about us in its multitude of forms...

More recently, another Lakota, Joseph Rockyboy (in St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:74) put it this way:

> Some people focus on the Sun Dance and the male power of the sky, but it is to bless Mother Earth with new life that the dance is held. When we pray in the sweat lodge or in our ceremonies, we always remember *Maka Ina* [Mother Earth]. We get our health from Mother Earth and the herbs that grow from her. We use some for food and others for doctoring.

The Earth is often imagined in the figure of a bison, since she is the "chief" patroness of the animals as *Tatanka*, the bison bull, is the "chief" of the animals (Short Bull in Walker 1980:144; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:110). She is also seen in the image of the turtle (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:112). Finally, she is closely linked with plants, as both food and medicine, and according to Thomas Tyon (in Walker 1980:120), she governs their productivity and gives them their potency. In various Lakota stories and liturgical texts, she is sometimes envisioned as an old woman (*wakanka*) who manifests herself near caves and springs, but she may also be represented interchangeably with her associate *Wohpe* [Meteor] as the young bison woman who also appears near cave openings (Left Heron in Walker 1917:183-190; Black Elk, H. in Thiesz 1973:16-18; LaPointe 1976:80-84; Melody 1977:152-164**).** Or she reveals herself in the guise of *Pte San Winyan*, the White Buffalo Calf Woman (Powers, W. 1977:169).

Pulverized earth is present in all major Lakota and Cheyenne ceremonies. When the Lakota make a ceremonial altar or *hocoka*, a process called *makagapi* [making the earth], special soil is used. According to William Powers (1982:42) in reference to Yuwipi:

> Vole dirt is used because voles are members of a sacred, omniscient community of creatures endowed with knowledge of both the surface of the earth and its subterranean parts. Like ants, which push earth and stones to the surface, moles, prairie dogs, wolves, coyotes, and other burrowing animals bring clean earth from the underground. This subterranean earth has not been contaminated by humans and is thus preferred for sacred rituals.

Louis Kemnitzer (1970:54) adds that every *Yuwipi* man has his own supplies of earth that are kept in special containers for the purpose of building an altar's sacred space. Indeed, in most major ceremonies, including the Sun Dance and vision quests, the location where the altar is built is cleared and specially pulverized earth is applied to the spot (Densmore 1918:218, 222; Kemnitzer 1970:70). The same also applies to the Cheyennes who excavate the sod and apply pulverized soil in building a new ground for their ceremonial altars, a process that Schlesier (1987:6) likens to the reenactment of creation.

The Cheyennes have several different names for the earth. One name, *nathoe*, refers to the land or country where people live, and another, *hestec*, is used for soil or ground (Petter 1913-15:422). *Notostovoom* refers to the surface of the earth, and it is closely related to *votostoom*, which means a habitable area (Petter 1913-15:422). The Cheyennes respectfully called the earth, *Esceheman* [The Earth or Our Mother] (Powell 1969:2:437; Schlesier 1987:5, 8, 82; Moore, J. 1996:208-211). She is associated with *He?estostse*, the deep center of the earth, the nadir of the world below. She is linked with land animals, especially bison. From her earthly home, she protects the spirits of the animals and oversees their emergence from a spiritualized essence to a material form, a process that takes place in their underground cavern homes, which Cheyennes believe are located in the Black Hills and at Bear Butte (Moore, J. 1974a:163, 1996a:208-211; Schlesier 1987:4-7). *Esceheman* and the buffalo, as Father Peter Powell (1969:2:443) puts it, are "the living symbol and source of female power." Her goodwill insures the abundance of food and game for the Cheyennes, and her essence takes expression in materialized forms (Powell 1969:2:444; Moore, J. 1996a:208-211). John Moore (197a4:162) argues that the deep earth represents stability; it is the substance out of which all living things are created but it does not create life itself without the intervention of the sun and rain. The substance of the earth is found in caves, but it also appears above ground on rocky surfaces without vegetation. The earth where plants grow represents the interactions between the sun, rain, and the earth (Moore, J. 1974a:161, 164).

Various manifestations of the earth mother figure in Cheyenne and Lakota traditions are associated with many stories connected to several important places in the Black Hills, including Bear Butte and Wind Cave.

C. Sun/Fire

In both Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, the Sun, *Wi* in Lakota and *Eehe* or *Atsovsz* (its sacred name) in Cheyenne, is typically associated with the winds and cardinal directions of the East and/or South (Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, Sword, and Blunt Horn in Walker 1980:105; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:126; Moore, J. 1996:206). Its appearance in the spring sparks the renewal of life and the greening of the earth (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:287-288). The Sun is addressed as father or grandfather, and Red Cloud told James Walker (1980:140) that the Sun and

Wakan Tanka were one and the same. The Cheyennes carry a similar notion and believe that the Sun is the quintessential representation of *Ma'heo* (Grinnell 1972:2:89) and the greatest life-giver among the Above Powers (Powell 1969:2:437; Moore, J. 1996:207).

In Lakota thought, fire embodies the essence of the Sun (Walker 1980:186, 230), and all ceremonial fires carry the rays of the Sun and its spiritualized *ton* or power (Walker 1980:220; Black Elk in Brown 1971:32). Like the Sun, fire is highly sacred (Bucko 1998:203), capable of sparking or renewing life. It is a potent purifying force (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:284). In Lakota traditions, as told by Nicholas Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:300, 311, 313), Moves Walking brought knowledge of fire and the ceremonial pipe to the people from the North.

In Lakota traditions, the Sun is closely connected to the bison and their progenitor, *Tatanka*, with whom he stays at night in the underworld (Little Wound in Walker 1987:67; Looking Horse in Parlow 1983a: 42-43; Hall 1997:133-134). Bison also come from the North and thus are linked to the North Wind, *Waziyata*, who is driven away by the Sun's helper, fire, so that life can be regenerated as evidenced in the liturgical texts from the *Pte San Lowanpi* (Buffalo Sing), a ceremony celebrating a young girl's passage into womanhood (Walker 1980:245). When a ceremonial fire or pipe is lit, just like the arrival of the Sun, it brings the return of the bison (Black Elk in Brown 1971:314; Goodman 1992:7). In both Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, the Sun represented by the East or the South and the spiritual embodiment of the North stand in an inverted, and sometimes antagonistic, relation to each other. The old man of winter and frost, known as *Waziya* in Lakota and *Hoimaha* in Cheyenne is represented respectively as the North Wind, *Waziyata* or *Notamota* (Moore, J. 1996:208). The Cheyennes believe that he arrives in a white cloud and tells the Sun to back away (Grinnell 1972:2:94-95). At the time of the vernal equinox, the Sun reasserts its power, and as it gets higher in the sky, it orders the old man of the north to return to the place from which he comes (Grinnell 1972:2:95; Moore, J. 1996:207). Grinnell (1972:2:95) points out that in the winter the Cheyennes held a feast and offered a pipe to the old man, requesting him to withhold the snow so that the people might hunt and live.

Among the Lakotas, red is the color representing the Sun but paradoxically it also represents the direction of *Waziyata*, the North Wind (Walker 1980:231, 232, 233). Insofar as blood stands for the unity of life and death, it makes sense the spiritual figures that stand for life-taking and life-giving potentialities would be represented by the same color. Not coincidentally, red is also the color associated with the bison that stand for the totality of all that exists (Black Elk in Brown 1992:13).

At least in Cheyenne traditions, and perhaps in Lakota as well, there appears to be particular and important connections of the Buffalo Gap area to the Sun, not only because the Sun Dance is believed to have originated at this location but also because this is the place where the quill workers guild, the *Me e no'ist st*, is believed to have originated (Grinnell 1972:1:159-169). Like eagle feathers, porcupine quills are believed to hold the sun's rays (Brown 1992:102, Sundstrom 2002:108). Also, the yellow hair of bison calves in Cheyenne teachings is closely associated with the sun, who gifts the bison to humans (Moore, J. 1974a:163). In fact, the Lakotas hold a special ceremony at the Buffalo Gap around the time of the vernal equinox to light their ceremonial pipes (Black Elk, C. in Goodman 1992:49-50), and they once followed this route to reach locations near Harney Peak where they performed additional ceremonial observances in the spring (Looking Horse 1987a: 42-43).

The Lakotas and the Cheyennes set up their ceremonial calendars according to the position of the sun and its relation to other celestial bodies. Places in and around the Black Hills, notably Bear Lodge Butte, the Race Track, and the Buffalo Gap, were believed to mirror certain

constellations in the sky, and as a result, they were locations where important and highly sacred transformative processes were known to take place at certain times of the year (Looking Horse in Parlow 1983a:42-43; Goodman 1992:7; see also, Chapters 14 and 15 for further details).

It is important to remember that in many American Indian traditions, including the Lakotas', openings to the underworld are also portals to the sky. In the daytime, the night sky is underneath the earth, and during the nighttime, the sun travels to the subterranean world (Hall 1997:133-134**)**. This helps to explain why certain elemental figures in tribal cosmologies are envisioned simultaneously as having sky and earth origins or homes, which are accessible at the highest pinnacles on the earth's surface such as mountain peaks and also from its lowest depths where these homes are approached through the openings to caves (see, again, Chapters 14 and 15 for more details).

D. Air/Wind

Taku Skanskan or *Skan*, the spiritual figure that presides over movement represents the Sky and the Blue Dome (Walker 1917:84, 1980:272), but his presence is also manifest in the stone that gave him birth and in the Four Winds (Densmore 1918:205-206) The Wind, *Tate*, is a close associate of *Taku Skanskan* and is one of his direct descendents. *Tate* is also, according to Red Rabbit (in Walker 1980:127), the younger brother of the Sun and a spiritual figure who has little interaction with humans. The Wind is a spiritual presence without material manifestations, except in its effects, and it is directly associated with the hunt and the meat of ruminant species (Buechel 1970:472; Sword in Walker 1980:99). Little is known about this spiritual figure, however, because his powers are part of the secret knowledge of Lakota holy men, *wicasa wakan* (Little Wound in Walker 1980:67; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:124-127). His essence or *ton* is revealed in the smoke of sage (Little Wound 1980:197). He is the father of the four winds or directions and the whirlwind, and it is through them that *Tate*'s action is manifested. The idea that the Wind and his sons are part of the central integrating and ordering principals in the universe is something the Lakotas and Cheyennes share (Jahner in Walker 1983:200-203; Moore, J. 1996: 206-208).

The dwelling place of the Wind is associated with the air and the northern lights where the *wasicunpi* [spirits] stay (Little Wound in Walker 1980:197), but he is also known to reside at certain underground locations, notably caves. Indeed, the element of the wind is closely associated in Lakota traditions with the area of Wind Cave (Campbell 1937), known in sacred language as *Tate Waxun* [Cave of the Wind] or *Tatoye Oyurlokapi* [The Opening of the Four Winds] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:209).

In Lakota traditions, wind is equated with the breath of life, *ni*, and it is a foundation for all movement. This is made explicit in Pete Catches description (in Gonzalez 1996:67), quoted earlier, that clearly connects the Black Hills and Wind Cave, in particular, with the wind and the breath of life. *Ni* is connected simultaneously to caves and bison because both emit visible vapors in the wintertime (Densmore 1918:67-68; Sword in Walker 1980:100), the quintessential physical sign of the presence of breath.[13] This connection, which is elaborated upon in much more detail in subsequent chapters, also underlies certain Lakota understandings of what happens in sweat lodges. Indeed, in many ways, as alluded to earlier, the interactions of stone, water, and fire in sweatlodges, mimic broader elemental relationships that are manifest in particular landforms and landscapes, including Wind Cave and the areas that surround it.

[13] The Cheyennes also make this connection (Moore 1974a:160).

E. Water/Thunder

Water, *mni* in Lakota (Buechel 1970:337) or *map* in Cheyenne (Petter 1913-15:1095), is another basic element. The Cheyennes and the Lakotas understand water as a life-giving force (Kemnitzer 1970:73; Grinnell 1972:2:134-135). According to the Lakota intellectual, George Sword (in Walker 1980:100), water is also closely linked to breath. As he puts it:

> The spirit of the water is good for the *ni* and it will make it strong. Anything hot will make the spirit of the water free and it goes upward. It is like the *ni, which* can be seen with the breath on a cold day...

The Lakotas and Cheyennes had at least two kinds of spiritual figures, usually identified as potentially dangerous, that were associated with water in its land-based form. Among the Cheyennes, they were known as *mih'n* and described as large lizards with horns, or as giant snakes (Grinnell 1972:2:96). These water spirits and their underwater "people" were known to possess buffalo, and they were also believed to play a role in their appearance and disappearance on earth (Grinnell 1972:2:97). According to John Moore (1974a:164), the waters of lakes and rivers come from "underground water that swells up out of the deep earth," and it is conceptually different from the water that falls from the sky. The creatures that inhabit these waters are known to bring harm to humans when offended, but they are not seen as particularly dangerous. When respected and gifted, they are known to be of assistance to humans (Grinnell 1972:2:96-97). In addition, the Cheyennes believe that a class of diminutive beings, *Ho ho'tama itsi hyo'ist*, that live in the ground and travel by night, commonly inhabit bluffs near springs, whose source is also the deep earth. Like the other spirits connected to the water, they can bring harm to people if offended and not propitiated (Grinnell 1972:2:126).

In Walker's rendition (1983) of the Lakota creation story, the female figure *Unk* is identified with the spiritualized essence of water (Walker 1980:50-51). Along with her offspring, the *unktehi, unhcegila, miniwatu, wamnitu, or mini wasicun* [water spirits], she is an ambiguous figure, sometimes reviled and feared, characterized as a monster and a harbinger of evil and bad luck. In other cases, however, they are respected and petitioned (Dorsey, J. 1894:438-441; Good Seat in Walker 1980:72; Sword, No Flesh, Bad Wound and Tyon in Walker 1980:194, Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:108, Short Feather in Walker 1980:115-116; Ringing Shield in Walker 1980: 112; Walker 1980:118, 122, 123, 208). The Lakotas envision the *Unktehi* [male] and *Unkcegila* [female] as giant animals with long tails and bison-like horns that can reach the sky. The *Unktehi* live in lakes, rivers, springs, and marshes, and they cause alkali water. The *Unkcegila* occupy the land and their remains are encased in the badlands of Nebraska and South Dakota and also at locations along the Race Track (Dorsey, J. 1894: 438-441; La Pointe 1976:17-20; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, Sword, and Blunt Horn in Walker 1980:108, Short Feather in Walker 1980: 115;Tyon in Walker 1980:122).[14]

The Lakota also have spiritual figures known as 'little people,' who are called by several different names, including *Wiwila*[15]*, Ca'otila, Unglagica, Gicila*, or simply *Gica*. They are known to occupy caves, rocky outcroppings, and forested areas near springs and other sources of water.

[14] Generally speaking, the cosmological beliefs surrounding the *Unktehi*, and other water spirits are much more elaborate among the Dakotas who lived in regions east of the Missouri River than they are among the Lakotas who resided in and around the Black Hills. The fossilized remains of the *Unhcegila* have important medicinal and spiritual values for both groups, however.

[15] *Wiwila* is a name David White (2002:217) mentions for Little People; it is not reported elsewhere. The word commonly refers to a spring, and it can be translated as "little life'.

They can be potentially dangerous to humans if the places where they live are not treated with respect, but they can be benefactors too, gifting humans in a wide variety of different ways (Dorsey, J. 1894:473; Howard 1955:462-472; (LaPointe 1976:45, 84; Powers, W. 1977:52-53; Sword, Bad Wound, No Flesh, and Tyon in Walker 1980:94; Tyon, Garnett, Bear, Sword, and Blunt Horn in Walker 1980:107; Swift Bird in Kadlecek and Kadlecek 1981:148; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:113-114). These figures are commonly associated with the Hot Springs area, but as described in Section Three, they also appear in stories of Wind Cave.

In its airborne manifestation, water is associated with the Thunders in Lakota and Cheyenne thought. The Thunders, *Wakinyan* in Lakota and *Nonoma* in Cheyenne, are envisioned as huge birds, which bring the rain and the storms that green and revivify the earth in the spring (Powell 1969:2:436, 438; Black Elk in Brown 1971:31; Grinnell 1972:2:95; Moore, J. 1974a:157-158; Schlesier 1987:8). The Cheyennes and the Lakotas once held ceremonies and offered the pipe in the spring to celebrate the Thunders' return (Grinnell 1972:2:96; Goodman 1992:50). The Thunders stand in perpetual conflict with the spiritual embodiments of water on earth, the *Unk-tehi* and the *Mih'n* (Moore, J. 1974a:165; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, Sword, and Blunt Horn in Walker 1980:105, 108; Walker 1980 118). In Lakota traditions, the home of the Thunders is commonly associated with Harney Peak in the Black Hills. They are also typically linked in Lakota thought with the West Wind and in Cheyenne worldviews with the South Wind. The West Wind is connected in Cheyenne traditions to water spirits.

Water is understood as the elemental medium by which medicines are transported in Lakota healing (Kemnitzer 1970:73), and this is also true for the Cheyennes (Grinnell 1972:2:134-135). Water figured prominently in Nicholas Black Elk's visions and healing treatments (in DeMallie 1984:119-121; 123-124, 138-140, 179, 215, 217, 223, 237-239, 240, 244; Standing Bear 1978:52. Luther Standing Bear (1978:50-52) wrote extensively about how water was taken as a preventive health measure. Lakota children were admonished never to eat food until they had a generous drink of water in the morning, and adults were reported to drink copious amounts of water, often flavored with mint, to maintain their health.

The spiritual essence of water is also embodied in the Black Hills, and, according to Pete Catches (in Gonzalez 1996:67**),** it is especially apparent in the thermal waters of the Hot Springs region. Catches (in Parlow 1983a: 2) talked about these thermal waters as follows:

> And you look at Hot Springs and its perpetual warmth, it was a place very sacred to the Lakota people. They go there to bathe and were doctored. The water, a spiritual gift that he brought to the Black Hills and to the Lakota people.

In general, the spiritual strength of water is revealed anywhere springs issue forth from underneath the earth's surface. Since springs are found throughout the Black Hills, including locations within Wind Cave National Park, there are many places in this region where the spiritual power of water is revealed.

IV. WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK AND THE ELEMENTS

It is through the relationships and interactions of the elemental forces described here that *Ma'heo* of the Cheyennes and *Wakan Tanka* of the Lakotas reveals its totality and brings about the perpetuation of the cosmos. There are special landscapes that typify these relationships, and one of these encompasses the Black Hills, including the region where Wind Cave National Park is located. As argued in Section Four, the Lakotas and Cheyennes practice what Yi-Fu Tuan (1978)

calls "geopiety," that is, they have a special reverence for the geography of the places in which they live. This reverence involves a totalistic way of viewing a landscape, one in which land forms and their associated elements, plants, animals, minerals, and soils are synergistically related as a synecdoche, where each phenomenon stands and speaks for the other as interchangeable representations of various spiritual essences or forces.

Certain landforms function as hierophanies, that is, they stand as physical representations of the cosmos. Bear Butte, as one example, represents and encapsulates a complex set of ideas about the workings of the universe. Known as *Nowah'wus* [The Teaching Mountain], it is spiritually important to the Cheyennes because it contains within its reach areas accessible to humans that represent all seven levels of the universe, from the *Nsthoaman*, the deepest level of earth, to the *otatavoom*, the blue sky. It holds the *Ma'heonoxsz*, the sacred caves of the *Maiyun*, and it houses the *heszevoxsz*, the subterranean cavern homes where the spirits of the animals reside (Schlesier 1987:4-6). The *Ma'heonoxsz* are places where some humans, such as the Cheyenne culture heroes, Sweet Medicine and Stands on the Ground, were given extraordinary knowledge about the workings of the cosmos, and as a result, these caves serve as models for the ceremonial lodges where the Cheyennes conduct some of their most important ritual observances. Although for different reasons, *Mato Paha* [Bear Butte] or *Paha Wakan* [Sacred Mountain] also possesses hierophanic meanings for the Lakotas (Forbes-Boyte 1996, 1999). Indeed, it is one of the places in the Black Hills that many tribes hold sacred, including the Arapahos (Trenholm 1970:80), Kiowas (Mooney 1979:322-324), and Plains Apaches (McAllister 1937:162, 1964). It is widely recognized by several different tribal nations as a place where the borders between the physical and spiritual world intersect and where animals and humans can reveal their spiritual essences to each other, and as a consequence, it is highly sacred.

Although the region of Wind Cave National Park is not explicitly referenced in this way in the existing literature, the information presented in the next two sections can be used to build a case that shows how this area served to convey important cosmological understandings for both the Lakotas and the Cheyennes and probably for other tribes too, including the Arapahos, Poncas, Arikaras, and Apaches. In the following chapters, the significance of the area is described in terms of the particular mix of animals, plants, minerals, and soils that make up its landscape. Some of these, notably bison, kinnikinick, and gypsum, also manifest metaphoric imagery. In Section Four, the importance of the park's two major landforms, Wind Cave and the Race Track, are described, and some of their symbolic imagery is revealed. When related to the neighboring Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs, these landforms constitute an integrated totality that reveals certain essential ideas about the workings of the cosmos. Together with the animals, plants, minerals, and soils that make up their respective landscapes, they speak to and speak for each other; they form an inseparable and unique totality that makes this a distinct place in the Lakotas' and Cheyennes' universe and in their conceptualization of the Black Hills. It is a place that teaches, as Bear Butte does, certain fundamental cosmic precepts. But in order to understand how and why this is so, it is necessary to first give some attention to the cultural uses and meanings of the different kinds of animals, plants, minerals, and soils that represent the biology and geology of Wind Cave National Park.